

Eötvös Loránd University
Faculty of Humanities

Doctoral Dissertation Theses

**THE HISTORY OF THE GREEK CATHOLIC EPARCHY OF
MUNKÁCS IN 1848–1849**

Ferenc Molnár

Budapest, 2018

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I. The importance and the historiographic antecedents of the issue

The Spring events of 1848 created a new situation in Hungary. First in the history of the country a government accountable to the legislation was formed, whose first measures included the abolishment of serfdom. April laws sanctioned by Ferdinand V had a great influence on the feudal system. The last Diet of Reform Era adopted laws, which paved a way for the bourgeois transformation of the country.

One of the most important issues was the determination of the relationship between church and state in spring 1848.

The relationship between the Batthyány-government and the leaders of the Catholic Church was not free from difficulties. The Catholic Church has lost its state religion status.

The role of the Greek Catholic Eparchy of Munkács (Mukachevo) in the Hungarian Revolution and War of Independence of 1848-49 is one of the less researched issues in our history.

First I faced this fact at the beginning of my PhD study. The Eparchy of Munkács consisted of seven counties and the Hajdú District played an exceptional role in support of its hinterland populated by Rusyn-speaking, Hungarian-speaking and Hungarian-speaking people. My PhD thesis deals with the history of the Eparchy of Munkács in 1848-49.

First, I begin the examination of two thrilling years with the review of archival sources and historiography of the topic. Then I demonstrate the most important stages to the establishment of the Rusyn-dominated Greek Catholic Eparchy of Munkács (Rusyns' settlement in Hungary, the so-called Ungvár and Munkács Union, the canonisation of the eparchy). In this chapter I follow the history of the Eparchy of Munkács until the inauguration of Bishop Basil Popovich.

In the second chapter I present the situation of the Eparchy of Munkács before 1848. In that regard, I describe statistical data of the bishopric in 1847 and I mention Bishop Popovich's activity before 1848 and Panslavist accusations against the Greek Catholic Church.

The third chapter of the thesis deals with the eparchy's supporting activity in the Hungarian Revolution and War of Independence of 1848-49. I would like to present results and challenges originated from the bishop's and the Greek Catholic Church's commitments to the Hungarian leaders. Besides, I explore why the Greek Catholic clergy cooperated with the Hungarian government was considered to be an enemy in the national newspapers. Also I present the activity and role of the clergy during the War of Independence.

In the fourth chapter I demonstrate the lobbying of the Eparchy of Munkács. We can gain insight to the bishopric's relation to the Hungarian government and the Catholic Church by the examination of the congrua and an independent Greek Catholic Department established in the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Public Education or by the examination of the future Archdiocese of Munkács.

During the research several questions were raised according to the bishopric's participation in the Hungarian Revolution and War of Independence of 1848-49. Hereinafter I highlight some significant topics among them. On one hand I would like to find out the role of Eparchy led by Bishop Popovich in Hungarian fights for freedom. What kind of expectations did the Hungarian government formulate towards the clergy? And was the clergy sensitive to fulfil them? I also would like to focus on the relationship between the Bishopric of Munkács and the Hungarian government. I also would like to find out what kind of opinion had the Hungarian leaders about the Rusyn Greek Catholic clergy. Another criteria of my examination is to see how the relationship between the Bishopric of Munkács and the Hungarian Catholic Church developed. What kind of common and different goals were set out in Ungvár and Esztergom? Besides, I also raise the question: what kind of steps the consistory of Ungvár took in order to represent the interests of the Eparchy? What kind of successes and failures followed these steps of Eparchy of Munkács.

The very poor literature on the history of the Eparchy of Munkács in 1848-49 mainly highlights the clergy's loyalty and patriotism. To support this statement, several examples were mentioned. On the one hand, they say that the Uniate Church supported the changes, Bishop Basil Popovich asked for his priest to support the revolution, and then the war of independence.

On the other hand, these studies usually mention that more than 80 ordained Greek Catholic priests participated as national guard officer, army chaplain and war correspondent in the war.

Studies and writings on the history of the Bishopric of Munkács did not always rely on primary sources and did not take the basic criteria of modern science into account. *Forradalom és szabadságharc Északkelet-Magyarországon 1848–1849-ben* [“*The Revolution and War of Independence in Northeast Hungary*”] by József Solymosi provides the most professional exploration of the history of the present-day Transcarpathia in 1848-49. This work is the author's PhD thesis, too. Solymosi sometimes refers to the main ethnicity movements of the region and the role of the Greek Catholic clergy. However, the author did

not use the sources of the State Archives of Transcarpathian Oblast (Ukraine) and he ignored the detailed presentation of the history of the Bishopric of Munkács.

Contemporaries took down 48–49 events in the Northeast-Hungarian Region. Gabor Varady, who was the commander of the 105th Battalion organized from the Máramaros Voluntary Battalion, describes the everyday life of the Máramaros County populated by more than 80% Greek Catholics and raises the everyday routine of the locally-recruited ethnicity soldiers in his collection, *Hulló Levelek* [„*Falling Leaves*”]. Tivadar Lehoczky, who fought as an artilleryman in the main theatre of war and then worked as the attorney general in the Schönborn-domains, who mainly drew the public’s attention to his archaeological research. The polyhistor published his monograph, “*Beregmegye és a munkácsi vár 1848–49-ben*” [„*County of Bereg and The fortress of Munkács in 1848–49*”] in 1899, whose real value is its sources. Ivan Szilvay, who came from a Greek Catholic priest-family, writes his grammar school pupil’s memories about the fateful events of the Hungarian Revolution and War of Independence and the Tsarist Intervention. The writer, who followed the Pro-Russian orientation and published his works under the name of Uriel Meteor, describes the Greek Catholic community’s relation to the Hungarian affair.

I would like to highlight György Csatóry “*Szabadságharc a végeken. Anno 1848-1849*” [“*War of Independence on Borderlands. Anno 1848-1849*”] and Balázs Bagu “*Az 1848–49-es forradalom és szabadságharc Kárpátalján*” [“*Revolution and War of Independence of 1848–1849 in Transcarpathia*”] studies among the works on local history. The fourth chapter of Bagu’s volume presents the priests and chaplains of Ung, Bereg and Ugocsa County. In this chapter he mentions the Greek Catholic priest in Máramaros County, Mihály Lőrinc who served as an army chaplain.

In the first place Ambrus József’s volume, “*Paphonvédek albuma*” [“*Album of Priest-Soldiers*”] published at the end of the 19th century drew the attention to the merits of Greek Catholic priests, who served in the war of independence.

„*Az 1848–1849-es szabadságharc és a Munkácsi Görög Katolikus Egyházmegye*” [„*War of Independence of 1848–1849 and the Greek Catholic Eparchy of Munkács*”] by István Bendász stands out from volumes focused on the Bishopric of Munkács and the Hungarian Revolution and War of Independence. He started his research to write his study before the nationalization of the Archives of the Eparchy. The most important value of his work is its sources, which are unavailable now.

During my research I faced the fact that the first part of Bendász's volume totally rely on the work "*Adalékok Egyházmegyénk történetéhez az 1848–49. szabadságharc idejéből*" [*Sketches to the History of Our Eparchy during the War of Independence in 1848–49*] by János Kozma, which was published in "*Görög Katholikus Szemle*" [*Greek Catholic Review*] in Ungvár at the beginning of the 20th century. We can read about the life of priests and seminarians in Ungvár, who served as national guardsmen, army and military chaplains in the war of independence in the volume of Bendász. The author of these lines published his book under the title "*A Munkácsi Egyházmegye 1848–1849-ben. Tanulmányok és kronológia*" [*The Munkács/Mukachevo Eparchy in 1848-1849. Studies and Chronology*]. This work contained his studies on the above-mentioned topic and the chronology of the Bishopric in 1848-49.

István Pirigyi mainly focus on the history of the Eparchy of Munkács in 1848-49 in his study "*Görög katolikusok az 1848-as szabadságharcban*" [*Greek Catholics in the War of Independence in 1848*].

II. The sources of the topic and the method of their elaboration

The majority of the processed primary sources originates from the Beregszász Section of State Archives of Transcarpathian Oblast. After the Second World War documents available in Beregszász was organized in accordance with the rules of the Soviet filing system. This practice remained after the independence of Ukraine. According to this practice documents of the Eparchy of Munkács organized in public archival records by communist authority got in the Fund 151. Brief, extract form of the logbook of the Eparchy and its minutes of consistory meetings are placed within the Fund of the Bishopric of Munkács. These sources are indispensable for my PhD thesis. I also conducted research in archives in Budapest, Esztergom and Nyíregyháza. I used the documents of the Archives of the Ministry of 1848-49 among the sources of the National Archives of Hungary, which can be examined in the form of microfilm. Relevant sources of the documents of Prime Minister's Office, Committee of National Defence, Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Religious Affairs and Public Education helped me to understand contemporaneous events.

In the Esztergom Primate Archives I used János Hám and János Scitovszky archbishops' documents concerning the Eparchy of Munkács.

III. The results of the research

On the eve of events in 1848–49 the Greek Catholic Eparchy of Munkács faced several challenges. The position of the bishopric was determined by the controversial relationship with the Viennese Court. Ungvár was grateful for the support of the Habsburgs to the canonisation of the Eparchy. With Maria Theresa's substantial support the Eparchy of Munkács was assigned to the jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Esztergom, eliminating the Bishop of Eger's influence on the Uniates.

Before the revolution the structure of the government did not favour the Greek Catholic. The Latin rite officials were commissioned to administer issues of the Uniates in Locotential Council departments, who did not care about the representation of the interests of the Bishopric of Munkács. Because these officials were mostly Roman Catholic the distrust of the followers of Byzantine rite was growing against the Latin Church leaders. The consistory of Ungvár faced another challenge: its clergy was accused of Panslavism and friendly relationship with the Tsar according to the growing nationalist ideas in the Reform Era.

These accusations proved to be unfounded. The Bishopric's lowest efforts to represent its interests induced disproportionate protests of the nobles.

From 1838 the leader of the Eparchy of Munkács was Basil Popovich, who had gained a 16 year church-administration experience in the Bishopric of Prešov. Popovich achieved substantial result in the late Reform Era. Significant building projects were realized, incomes of different foundations and benefits of priests' widows and orphans considerably increased.

The 1848-49 events had intense influence on the Bishopric of Munkács. After the Revolution in Pest the first accountable government was formed. Conservative circles supported the government due to the situation. Bishop Popovich and his consistory supported the changes. This fact was of considerable importance because the Eparchy situated in Northeast Hungary had numerous Rusyn, Romanian and Hungarian population. The Bishopric of Munkács functioned as a hinterland of the War of Independence and after the moving of the Committee of National Defence became the direct hinterland. So the clergy had a strategic role to ensure peace between the ethnicities.

Bishop Popovich and his clergy intended to cooperate the Hungarian power grown out of the March Revolution. The consistory of Ungvár conjured the clergy and the faithful to support the Batthyány-government and to maintain the public security and order in circular letters in Spring 1848. After the sanction of April Laws parish priests explained the mostly

illiterate ethnicity how to interpret laws. The Greek Catholic clergy had an important role in the consolidation of the first accountable Hungarian government.

With the events turned into war of independence the clergy provided more and more tasks: In autumn 1848 Romanian settlements in Maramaros County, and at the beginning of 1849 some part of the population of Rusyn settlements located close to the Galician border showed signs of hostility against the Hungarian power. The external instigating forces were the common point in these ethnicity unrests. The lack of considerable stationing Hungarian troops favoured the expansion of the enemy. Arriving Hungarian military reinforcements and Gábor Mihályi government commissioner cooperating with the Greek Catholic clergy pacified the local ethnicities in a relatively short time. These steps managed to prevent escalating ethnicity movements, to ensure the peace in the Northeast Hungarian hinterland and to maintain the smooth local administrative and military recruitment actions.

Besides, certain caution can be discovered in Bishop Popovich's behaviour. Sources and his written defence before imperial-royal authorities confirmed this fact. It is important to mention that his position was basically determined by the presence of Hungarian authorities in Ungvár until August 1849. The only real possibility was the cooperation with the Hungarian authority in this situation. Popovich emphasizes in his written defence that he intended to avoid direct confrontation with the Vienne Court, therefore he refused to be the member of the Parliamentary delegation of Pozsony to Vienna in the middle of March.

He left Pest on 17 September, 1848 and he never returned back to participate in the work of Upper House. All in all, he was a bishop, who only focused on the interests of his Eparchy in all circumstances. The years of 1848-49 were abundant in political and military turns. Popovich was always far from any form of extremism, calmness and prudence controlled his actions.

The maintenance of the compromise between the Court and the Hungarian government reached in spring 1848 would have been the most ideal situation for him. He probably did not encourage his priests and seminarians to replace their cassocks to military uniforms. Consequently, he was sure that his objection could induce the resentment of the Hungarian leading circles.

Popovich was willing to adapt to changes in 1848 and to stand up for the affair of the war of independence, but he raised his voice strongly and successfully against the expropriation of the seminar in Ungvar by the army. Incidentally, he had to celebrate a mass for the independence of Hungary in Ungvár. At the end of July 1849 he dedicated flags of some battalions of Kazinczy Division staying in Ungvár.

These acts had to be carried out, if he had refused to implement them, he would have feared retaliation. The bishop responsible for his priests and church-goers could not risk it. So, the leadership of the Eparchy after the dethronement of the Habsburg-House also implemented the decrees of the government. Because of the Russian intervention they announced crusade, fasting and procession. The Bishop of Munkács probably pulled till the last, because he thought he could best look after his Eparchy with his instructions. It was typical for his caution that he did not want to deal with divisive matters such as marriage of priests and organization of the synod of the Eparchy during the war. April Laws provided significant possibilities for the Eparchy of Munkács. Popovich and his group have recognized them relatively soon. During the debate emerged between church and state he definitely supported the Hungarian government.

Laws adopted by Liberals made promise to finance lower clergy and educational institutions from public funds. If it comes true, it had considerably relieved the large but low-income Eparchy of Munkács. In spring 1848 autonomy movement represented by the Hungarian Catholic Church supported the claim that every diocese provide the needs of clergy and educational institutions from its own funds. Besides, the relationship between Ungvár and Esztergom was burdened by historical grievances.

One of the most burning questions of the Eparchy of Munkács was the congrua issue. The Ministry of Culture led by Eötvös and the Committee of National Defence led by Kossuth had to deal with this longstanding problems. Kossuth considered a strategic issue to gain the support of the clergy serving in the ethnicity-dominated Northeast Hungarian hinterland as it reveals a letter from Kossuth to Eötvös. The congrua of The Bishopric of Munkács was provided by the first quarter of 1849, which was generally viewed very positively by the eparchy.

It is another cup of tea, that military expenditures of the country did not allow them to grant the congrua any more. An agreement on the apportionment of benefits by the approval of Catholic Church was reached at the end of 1848. It was favourable for Ungvár, because the share of the Eparchy of Munkács was considered to be higher than the level of the internal income of the bishopric.

We can highlight the lobbying intents within the government system and church organization. The Catholic Church Department has been already developed within the first accountable Hungarian government, which dealt with the affairs of Uniates. József Eötvös and Mihály Horváth, Ministers of Culture wanted to employ Greek Catholic officials under

the High Authority. Ungvár was not content with the proposals of the government, he fought for establishing an independent Greek Catholic Department.

According to their opinion, the Greek Catholics' increased government lobbying can come only true with creating an independent department.

The establishment of an independent Greek Catholic Metropolitanate dates back long historical antecedents. In summer 1848 the consistory of the Bishopric of Munkács proposed to establish an Archdiocese based in Ungvar, which exercise its jurisdiction over united Hungarian and Transylvanian church-goers, because of the location of the Eparchy, "its most ancient origin" and its multilingual nature. It is interesting to mention that the Eötvös' and Bach's circles had the same opinion about this question: they supported mostly the Romanians. (The Romanians managed to establish a Greek Catholic Archbishop independent from Esztergom in 1854)

During the 1848-49 events the clergy of the Eparchy of Munkács made huge efforts to stabilise the situation of the Hungarian government. The clergy achieved great results in the creation and the maintenance of the peace between ethnicities in the hinterland region.

The clergy supporting activity towards the Hungarian affair relied firstly on patriotic feelings, and secondly on their belief that the Hungarian government wants to create a country, where the Bizantine rite community gets into a favourable, more honoured position.

Bishop Popovich and his prelacy trusted in the goodwill of the Hungarian Liberals. During the parliamentary elections campaign, however, some nobles for its political reasons accused the clergy of support the Panslavist movements. However, the real trial of the war of independence proved that the priest and church-goers of the Eparchy of the Munkács were willing to cooperate efficiently and to pull till the last in a struggle of the creation of a modern and independent Hungary.

IV. Publications on this subject:

- Popovics Bazil munkácsi görögkatolikus püspök tevékenysége 1848-ig. *ÚJKOR.HU - A VELÜNK ÉLŐ TÖRTÉNELEM*. Interneten: <http://ujkor.hu/content/popovics-bazil-munkacsi-gorogkatolikus-puspok-tevekenysege-1848-ig>. (2017)
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- Az olmützi alkotmány kihirdetése az Ungvári Kerületben (1849. november - december). *Limes*, 2016. 3/1. 251-259.
- *A Munkácsi Egyházmegye 1848-1849-ben: Tanulmányok és kronológia*. Nyíregyháza: Szent Atanáz Görög Katolikus Hittudományi Főiskola, 2014. 220 p. (Collectanea Athanasiana I. Studia; 7.)
- A Bereg vármegyei görög katolikus papság az 1848. évi forradalom sajtójában. In: Fedinec Csilla – Szoták Szilvia (szerk.): *Határhelyzetek VI. Változó világ - változó közösségek a Kárpát-medencében*. Budapest: Balassi Intézet Márton Áron Szakkollégium, 2013. 15-39.
- A Munkácsi Görög Katolikus Egyházmegye főpapsága és a ruszin identitás viszonyrendszere 1848–1849-ben. In: Szoták Szilvia (szerk.): *Határhelyzetek V. Sztereotípiák, választások, túlélési stratégiák kisebbségi léthelyzetekben*. Budapest: Balassi Intézet Márton Áron Szakkollégium, 2013. 53-73.
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- A munkácsi püspökség kísérletei egy önálló görög katolikus érsekség felállítására a 19. század közepéig. *Fórum Társadalomtudományi Szemle*, 2013. 15/1. 63-74.
- A munkácsi görög katolikus püspökség az 1848-1849-es események viharában *Kisebbségkutatás*, 2012. 21/2. 287-309.
- A Munkácsi Görög Katolikus Püspökség és az osztrák neoabszolútizmus (1849. augusztus - december 31.). *Fórum Társadalomtudományi Szemle*, 2011. 13/4. 87-108.
- Az 1848–1849. évi tábori lelkesítő szolgálat kérdése a Munkácsi Görög Katolikus Püspökségben. In: Antos Balázs – Tamás Ágnes (szerk.): *Szemelvények ötszáz év magyar történelméből. A III. modern kori magyar történelmi PhD-konferencia tanulmányai*. Szeged: SZTE BTK Történelemtudományi Doktori Iskola, 2011. 171-180.

